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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the work of Russian literary critic M. M. Bakhtin as a theory of reading. Focusing on two critical essays, "Discourse in the Novel" and "The Problem of Speech Genres," the paper demonstrates how Bakhtin addresses the three elements of a reading theory--language, representation, and interpretation. Next, the paper compares Bakhtin's theory of reading to those theories of reading put forth by four prominent reader-response critics, Louise Rosenblatt, Stanley Fish, John Swales, and Mary Louise Pratt. The paper concludes with a discussion of the directions in which this analysis of Bakhtin's ideas might lead in reformulating current thinking about reading. (Contains 16 references.) (Author/RS)

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Abstract

In a world consumed by concerns about reading achievement, it is not surprising that theories about reading also abound. These theories contain three critical and interconnected elements--language, representation, and interpretation. This report examines the work of Russian literary critic M. M. Bakhtin as a theory of reading. Focusing on two critical essays, "Discourse in the Novel" and "The Problem with Speech Genres," the report demonstrates how Bakhtin addresses the three elements of a reading theory. Next, the report compares Bakhtin's theory of reading to those theories of reading put forth by four prominent reader-response critics. It concludes with a discussion of the directions in which this analysis of Bakhtin's ideas might lead in reformulating current thinking about reading.

BAKHTIN AS A THEORY OF READING

We live in an era that has much to say about the topic of reading. This is not surprising in a society where the primary focus of our schools is upon increasing reading achievement, where individual reading is a major past time, and where numerous jobs are devoted to reading in some form--creating text, preserving text, sharing text, analyzing text, etc. Consequently, in our society theories accounting for reading activity also abound. Educational psychologists proclaim metacognitive theories, professors of English literature discuss reader-response theories, and elementary school teachers say, "I just do what works," which is, in itself, a theory of sorts.

Theories of reading, whatever their bases, encompass, in some form, both a theory of language and a theory of representation, coupled with a theory of interpretation. A theory of language discusses the nature of language and thought and the relationship of these two elements to each other, positions them vis-a-vis the individual and the collective, and provides the basis from which connections can be drawn to ideas about text, reader, and author. A theory of representation provides a discussion of the characteristics of texts and textual features, how they came to be represented in particular fashions, and the role of the author in this process. Lastly, a theory of interpretation provides a rationale for the process, or mechanisms, by which meaning emerges for the reader from the text, readers respond to texts, and critics analyze texts. These three elements--language, representation, and interpretation (virtually inseparable)--and the roles they imply are the essentials of a theory of reading.

In this report, I explore the ideas of M. M. Bakhtin, the Russian literary theorist and philosopher, as a theory of reading. Over the last century, but particularly in the last several decades, researchers across a number of disciplines have questioned hierarchically arranged paradigms of thought about knowledge and language and have sought out alternative paradigms to guide them. In doing so, Bakhtin's work, with its socially oriented focus on language and the construction of meaning, has come to the attention of scholars in many different fields. Anthropologists, for example, write about *heteroglossia* and the *carnavalesque*, terms he coined; literary critics speak of Bakhtin's concept of *voice, dialogism,* and *intertextuality*. Reading or literacy researchers also have turned to Bakhtin but, to date, most such references in their work has tended to be piecemeal borrowing. Literacy researchers have yet to explore the theoretical implications of Bakhtin's work from a more global perspective, that is, as a theory of reading. The range and depth of Bakhtin's ideas present an opportunity to look not just at one aspect of the reader, writer, or text, but to weave these ideas together into a more comprehensive perspective of reading.

In this report, I present Bakhtin's interlinked theoretical formulations on language, representation, and interpretation by focusing my attention on two of his critical works: "Discourse in the Novel" (Bakhtin, 1981) and "The Problem with Speech Genres" (Bakhtin, 1986). In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin develops his ideas on language and literacy through study of the novel. In "The Problem of Speech Genres," he articulates his linguistic theories (dubbed *translinguistics*--a forerunner of our modern-day discipline of speech pragmatics), building upon concepts introduced in earlier works. Following a detailed examination of these two works and the ways that Bakhtin's ideas about language, representation, and interpretation can be woven together into a coherent and persuasive theory of reading, I will compare Bakhtin's theory of reading to current reader-response theories and draw conclusions about the ways Bakhtin's thinking might direct us to solutions for the current theoretical dilemmas we face in conceptualizing reading.

I have limited my discussion of Bakhtin to two representative works, because I believe it will allow me to focus with more clarity on my selected topic than would a full-blown review of all his works. For this reason, I would like this report to be seen as a starting, rather than as an ending point of discussion and exploration of Bakhtin's thought in reference to theories about reading.

"Discourse in the Novel"

Bakhtin's early major critical work, *The Problems of Dostoyevsky's Work*, had been published in 1929, before he was forced to leave Leningrad for exile in Kazakhstan. He wrote "Discourse in the Novel" between 1929 and 1936, the years he spent in exile working as a bookkeeper. During these years, he was also ill with a painful bone disease, which would led to the amputation of his leg in 1938. In other words, although Bakhtin's life was not easy, he nonetheless crafted a critical perspective of immense force.

The purpose of "Discourse in the Novel" is to establish a comprehensive theory of the novel that builds from socially grounded views of language. Bakhtin bases these views on dynamic dialogic principles that link subject and object, product and process, form and content, rather than arbitrarily dividing them. In the five-part essay, he outlines how the novelist uses these principles to achieve her or his aims, and he articulates many of the themes that will become distilled and clarified by the time he writes "The Problem of Speech Genres."

Bakhtin begins "Discourse in the Novel" by noting the problem that the novel, as a form of many competing social languages, raises for criticism, and proceeds to demonstrate how critics must alter their unitary view of language if they are to grasp the complexity of the novel. Bakhtin devotes a major portion of the essay to a discussion of the primary features of that complexity, concluding with a discussion of the author's role in the making of the novel.

As he states in his introduction, the purpose of the essay is double hinged. First, he is concerned with establishing a theory of the novel that will contrast with contemporary trends in literary criticism, or *modern stylistics* as he terms them. Second, and inseparable from that goal, is a presentation of his theory of discourse, beginning with its social genesis and tracing the ways that discourse is represented in the novel and interpreted by the reader.

In the following discussion, I examine the five sections of "Discourse in the Novel" for the contributions they make to an overall understanding of Bakhtin's work as a theory of reading. The five sections are: (a) *Modern Stylistics and the Novel*; (b) *Discourse in Poetry and Discourse in the Novel*; (c) *Heteroglossia in the Novel*; (d) *The Speaking Person in the Novel*; and, (e) *The Two Stylistic Lines of Development in the Novel*.

Modern Stylistics and the Novel

At the beginning of "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin briefly sketches the history of modern literary criticism, from its early emphasis on expressive language to its growing concerns with novelistic craftsmanship. In the process, he demonstrates how critics, overly focused on the individual technical aspects of form, forgot the social roots of the written work. He proposes to change this, presenting a new definition of the novel and its stylistic parts.

> The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. In it the investigator is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located in different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls. (p. 261)

These different stylistic voices include the author speaking directly, the different voices of everyday speech, the informal discourse of writing as it occurs in daily life, formal forms of written discourse, and the unique style the author lends to each character. This cacophony of voices, termed *heteroglossia* by Bakhtin, is artistically organized within the novel by the author, so that the effect is both heterogeneous

and unified. The heteroglossic character of the novel is a reflection of the heteroglossic character of language, with its numerous genres, stratifications, and contentious developments.

> These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogication--this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel. (p. 263)

The novel, then, presents a real dilemma to the critic. Its nature, linguistically plural rather than singular, unitary, or individual, stands in contradiction to the edicts of style that have governed previous literary forms. Analyses of the novel, whether poetic or rhetorical, have failed to recognize this difference. Bakhtin, in contrast, insists upon new ways of conceptualizing the novel, ways that celebrate its unique abilities to absorb and present the richness and diversity of spoken and written language that permeate our culture on every level and in every encounter. The novel, as such, is a model of the ways that language exists within our culture as a bounded but permeable form. Always emergent, the novel is caught between centripetal or unifying forces on the one hand and centrifugal or divisive forces on the other hand--forces that squeeze it together, giving it shape, and forces that pull it apart. The novel, like language, is always in motion.

Bakhtin identifies these currents of thought that shape language as ideological, meaning they are historical, political, and cultural in nature. These contending forces "intersect in the utterance" (p. 272). Thus, as he does in "The Problem with Speech Genres," Bakhtin demonstrates how the utterance is the meeting ground for the individual and the genre, the social forces of language as they exist in history and culture.

> The authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance. (p. 272)

In seeking to explicate this relationship, Bakhtin insists that we must turn our sights "to a series of fundamental questions concerning the philosophy of discourse . . . that is we must deal with the life and behavior of discourse in a contradictory and multi-languaged world" (p. 275). This is the task he tackles in the second section.

Discourse in Poetry and Discourse in the Novel

How, Bakhtin asks, is it possible for all this linguistic diversity to exist in the same "socio-ideological conceptual horizon" (p. 275)? To answer this question, he puts aside the role of literary critic for that of a linguistic philosopher. Once again, he begins by breaking with concepts gleaned from standard linguistic studies through a critique and redefinition of the word. Rather than viewing the word in a one-to-one relationship to its object, Bakhtin proclaims the complex and active ways from which we construct meaning from the word and its object.

> The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. (p. 276)

Dialogism, the posing of one voice against another, and the tensions, resolutions, and reformations of language and ideas under these conditions are the mechanisms Bakhtin proposes as central to

representation and to interpretation. Moreover, dialogism, because it exists in the very relationship between word and object, therefore exists in language and literature at every level, permeating every feature of expression. Again, as Bakhtin proclaims in "The Problem of Speech Genres," the dialogic relationship of the word to the object is situated in time and space. It looks backward and forward; to where it came from and to whom it will be addressed.

Dialogism sets up a new field of possibilities for the speaker or listener in each encounter. Seeking to understand, he or she mentally evaluates, sifts, compares, and settles the possibilities. Listening, speaking, understanding, as Bakhtin describes them, can never be passive acts. These are also highly subjective acts, as participants work back and forth across the various *conceptual horizons*, or *apperceptive backgrounds* present. Here, as in the later essay, Bakhtin alludes to the importance of value or evaluation in the process of language.

It is at this point that Bakhtin officially raises the role of genres. "Literary language . . . is itself stratified and heteroglot in its aspect as an expressive system . . . This stratification is accomplished first of all by the specific organisms called genre" (p. 288). This stratification is both within genres and across genres. It comes about in many ways, for instance, the differences among social classes, geographic regions, and professional groups stratify language.

> Thus at any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form. These "languages" of heteroglossia intersect each other in a variety of ways forming new socially typifying "languages." (p. 291)

Discourse is constantly in motion, and the mechanism of that motion is dialogism, the active process of weaving together different kinds of texts against various axiological backgrounds, moving in and out of those perspectives, constantly creating new forms. This is how meaning is constructed; this is how interpretation is achieved.

Heteroglossia in the Novel

In *Discourse in Poetry and Discourse in the Novel*, Bakhtin established the ideas of genre and dialogism. In this third section he describes the ways novelists select and organize from within this polyphonous state, and he uses the comic novel as his proving ground for these ideas. The concept of style is critical to the arguments he raises here. Bakhtin disputes that style is the outcome of unity, arguing that the wells of good style spring from the diversity and juxtaposition of language, rather than its opposite.

Authors have many ways of introducing these countering linguistic voices, for instance, shifting from the common language to other kinds of language more or less distant, parodying the language of various professions, or masking one language within another. This leads to a form Bakhtin labels a hybrid construction:

> an utterance that belongs, by its grammatical (syntactic) and compositional markers, to a single speaker, but that actually contains mixed within it two utterances, two speech manners, two styles, two "languages," two semantic and axiological belief systems. (p. 304)

Bakhtin discusses three major ways novelists can create these forms: through manipulating the role of the author, the characters, and genres in the text. Foreshadowing reader-response critics, Bakhtin discusses the use of the posited versus the authentic author as a novelistic technique.

Bakhtin believes that authors also create rich language systems for their various characters, juxtapositioning the characters' language in relationship to each other and mixing various language systems within and across what he terms *character zones*.

> These zones are formed from the fragments of character speech, from various forms for hidden transmission of someone else's word, from scattered words and sayings belonging to someone else's speech, from those invasions into authorial speech of other's expressive indicators (ellipsis, questions, exclamations.) Such a character zone is the field of action for a character's voice, encroaching in one way or another upon the author's voice. (p. 316)

Within and across these boundaries, authors separate or mix accents, punctuate the characters' sense by shifting from inner speech to indirect or direct speech, constantly in a dialogized and dialogizing fashion. *Character zones* is an idea that foreshadows the discussion in "The Problem of Speech Genres" on *utterance boundedness* and the implications of the inner and outer side of the boundaries.

Authors also have at their disposal the technique of incorporating genres. Genres that are frequently used in this respect include the confession, the diary, travel notes, biography, and the personal letter. The result of this mixing is not the certainty of unity, as many critics would claim, but the revitalization of language through diversity that results in a *double-edged discourse*.

The Speaking Person in the Novel

The speaking person is the vehicle through which heteroglossia enters the novel. Bakhtin's discussion of this feature rests upon three linked propositions:

1. "The speaking person and his discourse in the novel is an object of verbal artistic representation" (p. 332).

2. An individual character's discourse has the potential for being a social language and, as such, is a means of introducing heteroglossia into the novel.

3. "The speaking person in the novel is always, to one degree or another, an ideologue, and his words are always ideologemes" (p. 333).

The problem for the novelist, like speakers in everyday life, is to represent the image of language. Bakhtin claims that, whether in the novel or real life, language is about language, that is, the speaking person. "He said," "The news said," "Most people say," "I read somewhere that," "we discussed," "they think"--these are all examples of ways we talk about talk. Whether directly or indirectly, we are always talking or thinking about language and its representations, and when we do so we place that language within contexts, "its dialogizing background" (p. 340). In this way, human beings are always in the process of "assimilating our consciousness to the ideological world" (p. 341). This, too, is a dialogical process, one in which *authoritative discourse*, a prior and distanced voice that rings with the strength of socially accepted norms, contends with *internally persuasive discourse*, a voice that holds no formal authority.

At one end of the continuum, then, stands authoritative discourse, distant and spare. At the other end stands internally persuasive discourse, concrete and tightly interwoven with daily life's events. As you move toward the middle from either side, discourse shifts in different ways. Along the edges of the contact zone, is an area where new meanings are generated, new descriptions abound. The ideological self moves back and forth on this continuum between one's own words and the words of others, seeking to assimilate or construct meaning. Thus, for Bakhtin, the development of the self, in its linguistic and

cognitive complexity, is closely related, if not synonymous, to one's ideological development. This development is a dynamic and generative process, not fixed or static.

> The semantic structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean. (p. 346)

In speech and writing, we have many forms for "dialogizing the transmission of another's speech" (p. 355), but the novelist must go beyond that to artistically represent the speaker and his discourse. In other words, the artist has to create the image of language. This image of language is, for Bakhtin, the concept of a social language, a momentarily cohesive form--"a language that realizes itself in them (the images of language), but is not exhausted by them" (p. 356).

> A social language, then, is a concrete socio-linguistic belief system that defines a distinct identity for itself within the boundaries of a language that is unitary only in the abstract. (p. 356)

The discussion of social anguages is a circular one, leading Bakhtin back to his concerns about language itself:

> Language is something that is historically real, a process of heteroglot development, a process teeming with future and former languages, with prim but moribund aristocrat-languages, with parvenu languages and with countless pretenders to the status of language--which are all more or less successful, depending on their degree of social scope and on the ideological area in which they are employed. (p. 357)

The novelist is, then, not a tool, a vessel, or a cog, but an artist, whose task is to render artistic images of language that possess consistency among the images of these languages (p. 366).

The Two Stylistic Lines of Development in the European Novel

According to Bakhtin, the novel developed historically along two distinct lines. The Sophistic line operates from a unitary perspective of language. Sophistic novels are highly stylized or conventionalized and monologistic in character. Examples of this line are the novel of gallantry and the Baroque novel. The other line, exemplified by what we know as the modern novel, builds from dialogic principles of language and literature. It is here that the principles of heteroglossia blossom. While the historical ins and outs that Bakhtin cites in making his point may not be of interest to all, what is critical to building a theory of reading is the emphasis Bakhtin places on theories of language in relationship to theories of literature or literacy. Theories about language are the foundation from which we develop, or from which spring, our theories about its use. Moreover, theories of language must encompass historical notions of language. To Bakhtin, it would be useless to develop theories of reading without reference to our assumptions about language. Theories about the artifacts of language, literacy, must be considered in historical perspective.

In concluding "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin outlines new directions for the study of stylistics: The study of the novel must start from an acknowledgement of heteroglossia and proceed to a recognition of the novel's social and historical contexts.

> What is needed is a profound understanding of each language's socio-ideological meaning and an exact knowledge of the social distribution and ordering of all the other ideological voices of the era. (p. 417)

In examining the novel, we are both hindered and supported by two factors, the process of *canonization* and *re-accentuation*. Canonization is the centripetal force, drawing us toward a unitary and fixed reading of the work. Re-accentuation, is the centrifugal force, causing us to recreate the meaning of the work in terms of our age and selves. These forces are at work across and within works, their contending and dialogic presence give rise to yet new possibilities for representation and interpretation.

Contributions of "Discourse in the Novel"

The contributions of "Discourse in the Novel" to a Bakhtinian theory of reading are numerous. First, the essay clarifies that, for Bakhtin, a theory of reading must be grounded in a view of language as social and historical, dialogic and dynamic. Meaning emerges through an active process of struggle among unifying and conflicting forces. The text itself, while structured by the social and historical forms of language, is not a fixed or closed system.

Of particular interest in this essay is the view Bakhtin takes of the role of the text in developing the reader's identity. These ideas come forth in the fourth section of the essay, in which he describes the development of the ideological self. Again, of importance, and in contrast to other literary theories, Bakhtin creates a unique role for the author, one in which he or she is neither subservient to creativity nor a domestic servant of the text. Like many post-modern social theorists, Bakhtin locates meaning as being made at the borders--between reader and text, between society and individual, between utterance and utterance.

Although "Discourse in the Novel" is a work of literary criticism, many passages would be equally at home in a linguistics or philosophy text. Not surprisingly, Bakhtin works dialogically across disciplinary boundaries, in the same way he describes the novelist working dialogically across linguistic boundaries.

"The Problem of Speech Genres"

Sometime during 1952-1953, at least 16 years after he produced "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin wrote "The Problem of Speech Genres," a discussion of his views on linguistics. It deepens the views on language presented in the earlier essay and shifts the focus of the discussion from the language of the novel to the nature of the utterance. The themes and concerns as well as the mechanism proposed for the construction or interpretation of meaning that were raised in "Discourse in the Novel" are present in similar form in "The Problem with Speech Genres," but the passage of time has strengthened and condensed the arguments.

"The Problem with Speech Genres" consists of two sections: *I. Statement of the Problem and Definition of Speech Genres* and *II. The Utterance as a Unit of Speech Communion: The Difference between This Unit and Units of Language (Words and Sentences)*. As in the review of "Discourse in the Novel," I examine each section individually.

I. Statement of the Problem and Definition of Speech Genres

Bakhtin makes three critical points in the opening paragraph of this essay:

1. Language permeates all aspects of human activity, and is realized in the form of individual concrete utterances (oral and written) by participants in the various areas of human activity.

2. Utterances are distinguished by the unification of "thematic content, style, and compositional structure" and "the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication" (p. 60).

3. "Each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we may call speech genres" (p. 60).

These points form the basis of his definitions of terms and his statement of the problem. Through them, Bakhtin lays the groundwork for an understanding of the seemingly contradictory claim of his theory of language--that language is simultaneously diverse, individual, or unique while it is also unified or generic in form, and that the creative, dynamic tension between those two poles drives its continuing growth, change, and development. To place our understanding of this concept on firmer ground, Bakhtin calls for deeper study of "the nature of the utterance" and speech genres--"the diversity of generic forms of utterances" (p. 62).

In making this call, Bakhtin brings attention to holes in the fabric of language research conducted thus far, identifying shortcomings in linguistic, literary, and rhetorical studies. He also raises the need to understand better the pivotal role stylistics play in the study of both utterance and genre. Style, Bakhtin claims, distinguishes utterance and genre at the same time that it links them.

> Utterances and their types, that is, speech genres, are the drive belts from the history of society to the history of language. There is not a single new phenomenon (phonetic, lexical, or grammatical) that can enter the system of language without having traversed the long and complicated path of generic-stylistic testing and modification. (p. 65)

Bakhtin's proposed program of research posits a social or collective and historical theory of language and lays a new foundation for the basis of many areas of study, particularly those areas for which the material is concrete language. Believing that it is in the utterance, a real unit of speech communion, where choices about style and genre converge as concrete language, that we can learn most about the nature of language units (as a system)--words and sentences--Bakhtin addresses the body of his essay to this issue.

II. The Utterance as a Unit of Speech Communion: The Difference Between This Unit and Units of Language (Words and Sentences)

In the second half of his essay Bakhtin outlines the differences between his theory of language and other linguistic approaches, emphasizing the critical role of the utterance. The bulk of the second section is devoted to a detailed description of the constitutive parts of the utterance.

In his critique of the state of contemporary linguistics, as in his critique of literary criticism, Bakhtin demonstrates how linguists, like literary critics, have disregarded the social and historical nature of language. In the case of language, this has come about through the study of words and sentences (the technical science side of language) at the expense of attention to the utterance (the communicative nature of language). This stance has led linguists to such misconceptions asthe following: thought is independent of language; language is solely an expression of the individual's creative powers; and, in general that the roles of speaker and listener can be characterized as separate, divisible, and passive. In contrast, Bakhtin conceives of the utterance as active, dynamic, and responsive, thus speakers engaged in live speech are active, dynamic, and responsive. Every utterance they make builds upon previous utterances and presupposes future ones. Thus, the utterance is unique and distinctive, while also being historically saturated with meanings deposited by the individual and collective sense of many other speakers. Every speaker is a listener, and every speaker/listener is connected to every other speaker/listener. In linking definitions of language terms to the activity of language users, Bakhtin puts linguistics in motion.

Also in this section of "The Problem of Speech Genres," Bakhtin discusses four critical characteristics of the utterance.

1. Speakers establish utterance boundaries when they shift roles from speaker to listener. Utterance boundaries, therefore, depend upon the activity or judgment of the speakers, unlike sentence boundaries that depend upon linguistically established grammatical rules. An utterance might be a grunt, a word, a phrase, a sentence, several sentences, or more. Where it starts and where it stops depends upon where and when the speaker's speech turn shifts or dissolves--that point is the boundary of the utterance.

2. Boundaries have an inside and an outside. Speakers and listeners recognize the boundaries of utterances because they recognize the unfolding of the speech plan of the other--its subject, edges, and completeness.

3. The speech plan is in large part recognizable because utterances exist in stable generic forms, otherwise known as speech genres. When one speaks, one has access to a range of these stable forms. The speaker selects speech genres based upon the nature of the conversation--where, when, and with whom it is being held--the content of the discussion, and the range of individual knowledge about genres, as well as the speaker's subjective concerns. The idea of stable generic forms directing our discussions may conjure frightening pictures of rigidity or conformity, but Bakhtin goes to great lengths to dispel this notion, emphasizing the diversity of speech genres depending upon such factors as the situation in which they take place, the social position of the speakers, and various interpersonal factors.

4. Bakhtin weaves together these various elements--the meaning of utterance, its relationship to speakers, the idea of the speech plan, and the concept of speech genres--to claim the following:

> We learn to cast our speech in generic forms and, when hearing other's speech, we guess its genre from the very first words; we predict a certain length . . . and a certain compositional structure; we foresee the end; that is, from the very beginning we have a sense of the speech whole, which is only later differentiated during the speech process. If speech genres did not exist and we had not mastered them, if we had to originate them during the speech process and construct each utterance at will for the first time, speech communication would be almost impossible. (p. 79)

Bakhtin has now established a base from which to consider utterances in relationship to each other--their historical, expressive, and reflexive qualities. "Any utterance is a link in the chain of speech communion" (p. 84), he states, meaning that utterances are situated in time and space, and time and space exist for us as specific social and historical milieus.

Every utterance represents our subjective emotional evaluation of the content of the utterance. "There can be no such thing as an absolutely neutral utterance" (p. 84). We express our subjectivity through the numerous selections we make as we produce the utterance, drawing on our knowledge of speech genres. Utterances have value, and we make our selections based upon values we have assigned them through our experiences with words and genre.

Individuals and communities are linked across time through our value-laden speech, and, thus, as Bakhtin claims, utterances are mutually reflective. In the following passage, he provides a lyrical description of the dialogic ways in which utterances connect through individual and collective language activity.

> Any concrete utterance is a link in the chain of speech communication of a particular sphere. The very boundaries of the utterance are determined by a change of speech subjects. Utterances are not indifferent to one another, and are not self-sufficient; they are aware of and mutually reflect one another. These mutual reflections determine their character. Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other

> utterances to which it is related by the communality of the sphere of speech communication. (p. 91)

The discussion above focuses on the historical nature of the links between utterances and speakers. However, just as speech genres project the determinations of past speakers, they also embody conceptions of future listeners--the implied addressee. In our use of speech genres, we build forward, as well as looking backward, sending our values and ideas into new reiterations. In his discussion of the addressivity of an utterance at the end of his essay, Bakhtin turns to the ways that utterances, and speakers, concurrently address the future, as they address the past.

Contributions of "The Problem of Speech Genres"

"The Problem of Speech Genres" provides an overview of Bakhtin's primary concerns about language, concerns that will be critical to translating his ideas into a theory of reading. Claiming that language is a social phenomenon, Bakhtin centers his discussion of it on the dynamic relationship between utterance and speech genre. Throughout the essay, he works to demonstrate how language is both unique and individual at the same time that it is collective and generic, and how this tension is critical to linguistic creation. Language, he posits, is bound into permeable forms that are related chronologically, expressively, and reflexively, as are speakers and their speech communities. The picture of language one is left with at the end of the essay resembles nothing like the structured blueprints of sentence diagrams one usually associates with linguistic discussions. Instead, one departs with the image of a universe of gaseous shapes--spinning cores of molten ideas--sometimes sharp, sometimes dim around the edges, moving on different trajectories and acting upon each other in numerous ways. It is a picture charged with energy and interest.

Bakhtin as a Theory of Reading

For Bakhtin, a theory of reading would necessarily be rooted in a theory of language as a social phenomenon that permeates all human activity. Bakhtin viewed language as inherently diverse, or heteroglossic, structured by socially normative forms and yet simultaneously generative and open. Language, as Bakhtin theorized it, is ideologic, that is, embedded in time and place, and, thus, saturated with values--social, political, economic, and historical. As such, language looks backward and forward--every utterance is linked both to the past and to the future through what has been said and what will be said. These views hold true for spoken and for written language, for the act of representation, as well as interpretation.

Language and literacy, in Bakhtin's model, are in continuous motion through the process of dialogization. Dialogization, the ongoing struggle and tension between unifying (centripetal) and disunifying (centrifugal) linguistic forces, permeates every aspect of language, right down to the very word. Utterances are semi-bounded forms of a word or words, where social genre and the individual come together momentarily in a concrete articulation, coalescing as they are concurrently pulled in various directions by the diverse social languages and individual values embedded within them. Speakers and authors interweave their social and individual values and meanings across and through utterances, connecting utterances with utterances and texts with texts creating an intertextual tapestry of language.

The dialogic model is a processual one, as opposed to a formalistic or structural model; that is, it emphasizes the dynamic movement that occurs in the linking of speech utterances and the activity of speakers/listeners rather than emphasizing the isolated utterance or the isolated speaker or listener. It locks the construction of meaning into that moment or activity rather than in the isolated elements surrounding it or the structure that one uses to describe the dynamism. On the processual continuum, Bakhtin's views might be said to reflect one of the earlier mechanical models, a Newtonian brand of post-modernism. His roots to Marx, and through Marx to Hegel and the transformational moment, are

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transparent. Although a contemporary to Dewey and his transactional theories of knowledge, which also emphasize the construction of meaning as an active process and seek to ground meaning in social experience, Bakhtin makes no reference to Dewey's work.

In my estimation, Bakhtin has the most to say about the text, somewhat less to say about the author, and only implies the reader. The text that he focuses his greatest theoretical concerns upon is the novel. It was his desire in "Discourse in the Novel" to develop a comprehensive and linguistically based theory of the novel. Bakhtin saw the novel as a cohesive, artistic representation of images of social language. Like the utterance, the novel appears in his descriptions to be a semi-permeable form that solidifies momentarily for the reader.

It is the author's role to create this artistic representation, shaping images of social language together into a whole that expresses a unity. Unity, a suspended moment, being distinguished from unitary, a structured, isolated element, which Bakhtin saw as static and related to views of language and literary criticism to which he was distinctly opposed. Bakhtin's author, like his view of language, is both unique and active while being social and conformed, and these two opposing aspects are held in constant creative tension. Bakhtin's outlook is quite different, then, from historical views that depict the author as the sole individual creator, a vessel from which the work is poured, or a tool through which creativity flows on to the paper.

The reader brings unique *and* socially conformed knowledge and skills to the work of deciphering the text. Just as the text is dialogized on all levels, the reader enters into a dialogic relationship with the language of the text--the images of social language and the individual values of the characters. Moreover, the text is not an artifact that remains outside the reader, the contact zone between reader and text is rich and generative of meaning, and, in the interactive process of making meaning that occurs in that zone, the reader comes to internalize in some varying proportion the meanings and values of the text. These then become part of the reader's next presentations, and in that way reshape the meaning of the text. Because communities read shared texts and speak in communal forums, it is not only our individual subjectivities that internalize these representations, but also our collective subjectivities. Bakhtin would argue that in this way linguistic and literary texts play a critical role in the development of the ideological self and the ideologies of our times. Inherent in Bakhtin's perspective, then, is a view of the reader and of the community of readers in which that reader is embedded.

The Bakhtinian view of language, text, and reader as individual and collective activity was brought home to me recently when I watched the cartoon movie *Aladdin*. In that movie, the genie, a blue and quickly metamorphosing shape, shifted from moment to moment into forms and voices that recalled numerous current and historical cultural figures. At one moment he was Groucho Marx, at another a rap star. The audience laughed, recognizing each reincarnation, which resembled, and, so captured, the essence of that character, and yet remained uniquely the genie involved in the plot to support Aladdin's bid for the princess. The movie screen was a text in which the individual and collective subjectivities of the audience interwove, and we acknowledged that in our shared laughter.

Bakhtin's Theory of Reading and the World of Reader-Response Theories

The response of the reader to a text is one aspect of reading activity that has received considerable research attention recently. As one aspect of a larger account of reading behavior, it is possible to work from an idea of reader-response back to the larger, guiding conception of reading behind it. For this reason, it would be reasonable to compare Bakhtin, as positing a theory of reading, to contemporary critics concerned with theories of readers' response.

Thinking simplistically, reader-response theories can be divided into one of two camps that trace back to their linguistic and epistemological antecedents. In one group, the location of meaning lies in a fixed

place or structure: the rules of the text, the author, or the reader. The elements of meaning are carefully separated--thought from language, speaker from utterance, speaker from listener, and language from literacy. Indeed, these dichotomies, or their isolated parts, come to take on meanings of their own.

Again, speaking from an overly simplistic outlook, we could include the following kinds of criticism under the heading of the first camp: expressivism, New Criticism, Russian formalism, structural affect theory, reception theory, structuralism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalytic approaches.

In contrast to the first camp of ideas are those theories that put meaning into motion, focusing on the interaction or transaction among author, reader, and text. These theories emphasize the social origins of language behavior, emphasizing the interpretive, rather than the definitive nature of constructing meaning. Under this heading, we could include theories of interpretive communities, discourse communities, and transactional and feminist approaches.

To compare Bakhtin to the first camp is like comparing apples and oranges: the differences are clear, stark, and readily definable. The contrasts with the second camp are, however, much more subtle and perhaps more instructive in helping us to refine our understanding of Bakhtin's theories and more interpretive or constructed views of reading. For this reason, I will examine four contemporary American critics who have written on the topic of reader response from socially oriented positions and then compare these positions to the theory of reading I extracted earlier from Bakhtin.

I begin my discussion with Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theories, which are based upon John Dewey's pragmatist or constructivist philosophy. Most American critics who work from a socially constructed view of knowledge and language, have built upon the work of John Dewey or of his neopragmatist followers such as Richard Rorty, and not the work of Bakhtin (Dewey, 1920/1991; 1929/1981; 1933; Rorty, 1979). This may be because Bakhtin's work has only recently become available in English translation. Although Dewey's transactional theories are similar to Bakhtin's dialogistic position, there are also subtle differences. Beginning the discussion with Rosenblatt provides me with an opportunity to introduce Dewey, his views and historical position, to the discussion of Bakhtin, a matter of importance when considering Bakhtin's theories in relationship to the scholarly world beyond Russia. After Rosenblatt, I first discuss Stanley Fish's concept of interpretive communities, then John Swales' discussion of discourse communities. I conclude with a discussion of Mary Louise Pratt's feminist critique of reader-response ideas.

Transactional Theories: Louise Rosenblatt

The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work (1978)

In 1938, Louise Rosenblatt published *Literature as Exploration*, her translation of the views of John Dewey into the curricular field of English instruction (Rosenblatt, 1938/1976). Forty years later, she published *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, a reiteration and elaboration of those original principles. Today, the discussion of Rosenblatt's (and Dewey's) ideas is still raging.

Rosenblatt built her reader-response theories upon Dewey's transactional theory of knowing. Dewey believed that inquiry, the sustained investigation of a problematic question, was at the heart of the process of knowing. In this process of knowing or inquiry, subject and object exist in a transactive, dynamic relationship that evolves over time. The sum of this transaction is experience, and it is the increasing enlargement of experience that Dewey sees as the goal of education. Like Bakhtin, Dewey recognized the chronological dimension as crucial to a dynamic theory, emphasizing knowing as something prospective and eventual, and like Bakhtin, he refuted philosophical theories that made knowledge antecedent and separate from practice. Where traditional philosophers lauded certainty,

Dewey and Bakhtin elevated the problematic--ambiguity, uncertainty, and the indeterminate. Both also recognized the value of value, and presented alternatives to the positivist concerns with neutrality and the devaluation of value in the construction of meaning. Where transactional theory and dialogism might differ is in the ways they perceive the subject and object in transaction. Dewey would see them in tighter linkage, perhaps, than would Bakhtin, who presents them as bound, but in a taut, suspended state, moving toward each other as they are pulled apart.

Rosenblatt, in seeking to build a theory of reading from Dewey's philosophy, begins by outlining the pitfalls of earlier theories, particularly those of New Criticism with its emphasis on close readings of the text. The meaning is not to be found in the text, per se, she offers. Rather, the meaning emerges from the reading. The text is a stimulus:

> the text serves as a blueprint . . . the text regulates . . . the "text" may be thought of as the printed signs in their capacity to serve as symbols. (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 11-12)

The poem is the emergence of this meaning, that is, the transactive experience itself. "The poem, then, must be thought of as an event in time" (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 12). In the process of evoking a poem, we draw deeply upon our subjectivity--our emotions, memories, and experiences--and for this insight Rosenblatt can be thanked for the positive injection of affect into discussions of literary criticism. Drawing upon Dewey, she emphasizes that interpretation is not an immediate occurrence--a "now you have it now you don't" experience--rather, understanding is many layered. The reader moves back and forth, selecting, synthesizing, and rearranging. Tension, conflicts, or questions are inherent in this process, but it is that inquiry into what is problematic that drives the process of knowing. This is close to Bakhtin's position when he declares that literary style is based in diversity not unity.

How then, she asks, do we account for the different kinds of reading that readers undertake, and, particularly, how do we account for literary reading? What is special about the process of making meaning in the literary realm? In answer to these questions, she offers the concepts of *efferent* and *aesthetic* forms of reading.

> In nonaesthetic reading, the reader's attention is focused primarily on what will remain as the residue *after* the reading--the information to be acquired, the logical solution to a problem, the actions to be carried out . . . In aesthetic reading, in contrast, the reader's primary concern is with what happens *during* the actual reading event. (Rosenblatt, 1978, pp. 23-24)

Given this outlook on text, reader, and reading, Rosenblatt is then faced with the task of describing how interpretation can occur and, given the openness of the system she proposes, what will be the role of the critic. Like Fish, as I will discuss in the next section, she feels compelled to answer those who fear the subjectivity of multiple readings and seek validity for particular readings. In developing her answers to these fears, she is more concerned with establishing the rights of individuals to their diverse readings than with demonstrating the existence of social configurations that develop around shared notions of a particular reading, as is Fish.

As rendered by Rosenblatt, Dewey's theories make for interesting contrasts with Bakhtin's theories. Her analysis of Dewey's transactive theory of knowing led her to a highly individualistic reading of reading. There is also a sense in Rosenblatt of high culture or literature versus low culture, the nonliterary or popular culture. Bakhtin relished the diversity or stratification of social languages that made up the novel. After reading Rosenblatt, I have the feeling I would not have wanted to seat her next to Bakhtin at a dinner party.

Where I see a surprising congruence between their perspectives is in Rosenblatt's classification of aesthetic/efferent reading and Bakhtin's attempt to define poetic (unitary) versus prose (dialogic) language. In taking this position, I think Bakhtin may have been building on hermeneutic perspectives that differentiate scientific from humanistic discourse, but, regardless, he is as ineffective in his attempt as she is in hers. Both arguments remain as tools to get the reader to see, rather than theories that can convince.

Interpretive Communities: Stanley Fish

Is There a Text In this Class? (1980)

Stanley Fish's work holds special interest for me because of the way he charts his route from camp one to camp two, describing the barriers he met, the detours he took, and the ways he justified his reading of his compass. Fish began as a proponent of the New Criticism perspective, and as such, he held the roles of text, author, and reader to be autonomous. In his early writings, he struggled with questions of objectivity and subjectivity. He was concerned, as was New Criticism, with the notion of the unconstrained self and the need to find a way to hold our subjectivities in check. Gradually, however, he abandoned that position to become an advocate for the concept of interpretive communities--stable discourse communities where shared norms about reading, writing, and the ways of constituting the properties of both reign. In such a community, texts are seen as interpretations, emerging from the reading. Criticism itself is a product of interpretation, rather than the creator of such.

Fish draws from constructivist or pragmatic philosophy in building the idea of the interpretive community and describing its implications. He contends that selves are socially constituted, just as texts are socially constituted. Because all--selves, texts, readers, and writers--are part of the constructions of the same social soup of beliefs, perceptions and their organization, Fish can make the claim that we can no longer arbitrarily separate subject and object. Rather than depicting subject and object as being opposed, we must now see them as constructions of the same acts of interpretation. In arguing against the artificiality of the subject/object divide or the divide between utterance and speaker and listener, Fish uses language that sounds, in many ways, eerily like Bakhtin's critique of structural linguistics or Russian Formalism.

> It seems to me that the problem of communication, as someone like Abrams poses it, is a problem only because he assumes a distance between one's receiving of an utterance and the determination of its meaning--a kind of dead space when one has only the words and then faces the task of constructing them. If there were such a space, a moment before interpretation began, than it would be necessary to have recourse to some mechanical and algorithmic procedure by means of which meanings could be calculated and in relation to which one could recognize mistakes. What I have been arguing is that meanings come already calculated, not because of norms embedded in the language but because language is always perceived, from the very first, within a structure of norms. That structure, however, is not abstract and independent but social. (Fish, 1980, p. 318)

Fish's application of constructivism or pragmatism to literary criticism is, however, in my opinion, more structural than processual. Part of the reason for this has to do with the purposes of the project he has set himself--to persuade his readers, non-believers from a world of literary criticism penetrated by the epistemological beliefs of New Criticism--that constructivist views of literary criticism have validity. As a consequence, whether he is aware of it or not, his arguments are often directed to those unstated critiques rather than toward formulations of future notions. He is successful regarding his purpose--disestablishing the idea of autonomous roles for text, author, and reader and presenting a

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philosophical basis for his claims--but his success accommodates these views to traditional literary criticism. His views do not assimilate new perspectives to the discipline.

Where he fails is in his continued reliance on the static forms as opposed to an interest in the dynamic transformations that occur when these forms are in motion. The way Fish depicts the new relationship between subject and object, as simply members of the same set, is essentially no more active than the old picture. It is as if subject and object had been taking a walk and fell into the same lake, and so now we can consider them the same species of fish (the pun was unintentional). In contrast to Fish, Dewey, the grandfather of pragmatic thought, and Bakhtin, a scholar cut from a similar philosophical cloth, saw subject and object linked in unfolding transformative relationships. Dewey termed this *inquiry*, the process of active and continuous inquiry around a problematic question; Bakhtin termed it *dialogism*, the dynamic interaction between subject and object, that is, a zone of construction, not a village of serenity. In addition, also a consequence of making so strongly his point for social norms, Fish loses sight of the need to address individual agency, something that Dewey and Bakhtin did not do.

A particularly interesting contrast between Fish and Bakhtin arises in comparing Fish's idea of interpretive community to Bakhtin's conceptions of genre. Fish norms the population; Bakhtin norms the texts. Fish places his attention on the definition of the group, and then from the group grows the socially normed discourses. This is a kind of clone theory that leaves one wondering how language changes, how borrowing occurs, and what adaptations can be made. Bakhtin, on the other hand, sees individuals and groups as both active *and* interactive, which means they create texts that fit genres and work across genres, and each work they create is dialogized down to the very word. In other words, genres and social languages do exist but they are as ephemeral as interpretive communities themselves.

Discourse Communities: John Swales

The Concept of Discourse Community (1990)

Swales presents a theory of discourse communities that possesses a number of affinities to Fish's concept of interpretive communities and clear borrowings from Bakhtin's analysis: He ends up with a concoction that would interest both parties, but satisfy neither. Like Fish, Swales focuses on the community of readers, the ways by which they define their membership and reproduce their solidarity through social practices. Unlike Fish or Bakhtin, however, he elects to emphasize the dichotomies that exist among discourse communities that communicate primarily by oral means (sociolinguistic groupings) versus those that do so by written (socio-rhetorical groupings) means. The former he labels *centripetal*--"they tend to absorb people into that general fabric," and the latter, he labels *centrifugal*--"they tend to separate people into occupational or specialty-interest groups" (Swales, 1990, p. 24). The terms centripetal and centrifugal sound definitely Bakhtinian, but the argument reads like Walter Ong's description of the great divide between orality and literacy (Ong, 1982).

Swales proposes six criteria for discourse communities.

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals,
2. . . . mechanisms of intercommunication among its members,
3. . . . uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback,
4. . . . utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims,
5. . . . has acquired some specific lexis,

> 6. . . . has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise. (Swales, 1990, pp. 25-27)

Although Swales focuses on the definitive boundaries of discourse communities, he is not indifferent to concerns about the margins or borders of discourse membership and the ways language changes at that juncture. Nor does he ignore issues related to membership norms versus individual agency. Within and across discourse communities, he argues that it is not uncommon for members to use discourse conventions without being fully assimilated to that particular community.

> Individuals may belong to several discourse communities . . . and individuals will vary in the number of discourse communities they belong to and hence in the number of genres they command.
>
> To deny the instrumental employment of discourse conventions is to threaten one common type of apprenticeship and to cast a hegemonical shadow over international education. (Swales, 1990, p. 30)

In these passages, Swales produces echoes of Bakhtin's discussions of intertextuality and the ways that written and speech forms overlap and combine through heteroglossia, character zones, and the other techniques he considers. He approaches the concerns about boundaries, their inside and outside edges, that Bakhtin raised. Swales provides a plausible explanation for these issues, but not an answer. For that we must turn to the feminist critique.

Feminist Theories: Mary Louise Pratt

Linguistic Utopias (1987)

A criticism of Dewey raised by feminist educational philosopher Jane Roland Martin (1985) is that while he believed in a free marketplace of ideas where all could contribute equally to the discourse, what he failed to recognize was that not all are allowed into the marketplace. Some cannot even get through the door, and others are given special handicaps once they do so. Dewey made the same mistake as those who have put forth the ideas of discourse communities and interpretive communities, and that is to assume the "imagined community" (Pratt, 1987, p. 49).

The imagined community is the ideal world that exists in the imagination of the Western world, a place with finite boundaries . . . sovereign, and . . . a "deep, horizontal comradeship, a fraternity" (Pratt, 1987, p. 49). Pratt, who borrowed this metaphor from social scientist Benedict Arnold, contends that this is the same utopian community that linguists turn to in their visions of speech communities. By the terms of this definition, the theories about discourse or interpretive communities that are developed from this model focus on structure as opposed to process and are inherently male. They account for a particular community but not its interactions with the many "others." Pratt has driven straight to the heart of the problem presented in Fish and Swales.

Pratt calls for a linguistics of contact, one that will make the border/boundaries/places of contact where differences arise the center of our thinking about language development.

> Imagine, then, a linguistics that decentered community, that placed at its centre the operation of language across lines of social differentiation, a linguistics that focused on modes and zones of contact between dominant and dominated groups, between persons of different and multiple identities, speakers of different languages, that focused on how such speakers constitute each other relationally and in difference, how they enact differences in language. (Pratt, 1987, p. 60)

Pratt's discussion injects critical notions of power into the discussion of reading and the meaning of language, representation, and interpretation. In making this move from the imagined community to a linguistics of contact, we have now come full circle, back to a position on language and reading that is fairly close to Bakhtin's.

Conclusion

As I said at the beginning of the report, we live in an era that has much to say about reading and has devoted much time to theorizing about reading: what it is, how we represent ideas in text, and how we interpret text.

Theories about reading cross disciplinary lines. Linguists, psychologists, literary critics, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, and others have all had something to say on this subject. The number of theories and the amount of theoretical speculation on reading are quantitatively substantial, but often not comprehensive enough to link linguistic foundations with descriptions of representation and interpretation. It is not unusual to find explanations of reading activity focusing on one dimension while neglecting others, and this is one of the reasons why we lack an adequate theory from which to describe reading.

The lack of an adequate and comprehensive theory of reading means that there are many problematic questions that must go unanswered given current formulations. These include:

- How do we account for conflicting paradigms in reading theory--both within and across individuals and discourse communities? Why is it possible to teach and learn despite these conflicts?
- How does language change, grow, and emerge through literacy activities?
- Should ways of thinking about representing text and interpreting text be theoretically and pedagogically separated so far apart?
- How might we account for individual agency and social shaping under the same, rather than different, theoretical umbrellas?

I began with an exploration of the reading theories of M. M. Bakhtin, who presents an unusually comprehensive perspective on language and literacy. I compared Bakhtin's ideas with those of a number of American theorists about reading emphasizing similar socially oriented linguistic foundations, beginning with that proposed by Rosenblatt in 1938, working through discussions of interpretive and discourse communities, to conclude with the feminist critique of Pratt. I return now to Bakhtin.

Bakhtin's ideas offer ways to resolve a number of the problems that I see plaguing many of the positions I have reviewed. The critical elements of his work that we must consider are: (a) anchoring theories of literacy in a foundational theory of language as a social phenomenon; (b) moving into a processual model rather than shoring up a structural model that merely accounts for process; (c) accounting for the ways language users work fluidly (and sometimes disjunctively) across numerous linguistic boundaries--utterances, genres, discourses, languages, paradigms, etc.; (d) drawing together theories of reading and writing into a meaningful whole for understanding literacy practices; (e) understanding the implications of time and continuity that are inherent in a processual model for literacy theories; and (f) recognizing the value or ideological horizons of our constructions.

Bakhtin's ideas, alone and in conjunction with others, point the way to a number of new and better theoretical formulations than those with which we currently operate. For instance, Bakhtin's theory of dialogism presents one way of understanding how a processual model differs from the structural/processual model of Fish, but we might want to explore Bakhtin's dialogism in relationship to Dewey's transactional analysis or some feminist theories. The processual model implies time and continuity--as a necessary element of the unfolding of meaning, and as an integral part of understanding language change and development. Bakhtin and Dewey can both provide important ways to think about chronology, history, time, and the processual that have not yet been adequately tapped. The ideas about intertextuality that Bakhtin presents offer great insights into the ways that we can think about the mixing of language on every imaginable level, complementing postmodern ethnographic formulations alluded to in Pratt's work. These are only some of the directions in which we might proceed. Most important, perhaps, Bakhtin can lend us direction in connecting the pieces critical to a larger view of reading--language, representation, and interpretation--in meaningful ways.

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